

# Austria's Textbook Initiative

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## Austria's Textbook Initiative

- Exists in its current form since 1972.
- Financed using money from the Family Relief Fund.
- It is an in-kind benefit that provides schoolchildren with the learning materials they need, while at the same time relieving the financial burden on parents.
- Three separate entities are involved in the Textbook Initiative: the Austrian Federal Chancellery – Department Family and Youth, which provides the funds; the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research, which handles the learning materials approval process; and the Book Trade and Media Management Association, which represents educational publishers and the book trade.

## Austria's Textbook Initiative

- All ordinary schoolchildren in Austria in public or state-accredited compulsory schools, middle or upper secondary schools, in compulsory education at a private school or undergoing homeschooling are entitled to the Textbook Initiative's in-kind benefits.
- Every year, 1.2 million schoolchildren at 6.000 schools throughout Austria receive around 9 million items of learning material. Schools can choose from over 8.000 titles. Annual expenditure is around €109 million. For the last few years, all ordering of materials has been done electronically, via the Textbook Initiative Online internet application.

## Textbooks and Learning Materials

- Textbooks, E-book (printed textbook and digital copy), E-book+ (printed textbook and complementary interactive content) and therapeutic instructional materials which have been declared suitable for a given type of school and school year.
- Self-chosen learning materials (books, digital audiovisual teaching materials, learning software, learning robots and programmable minicomputers, instructional games, therapeutic instructional materials) may be acquired up to 15% of the maximum assigned amount per pupil and type of school.

## Textbook Limits

- The textbook limit is the cap assigned per pupil, type of school and year for ordering of textbooks.
- The caps per pupil for the respective types of school are as follows:

Primary school (6 – 10 years)	€ 50.00
Special needs school (6 – 15 years)	€ 75.00
General secondary school/ secondary academic school ( <i>Gymnasium</i> ), lower level (10 – 14 years)	€ 95.00
Secondary academic school ( <i>Gymnasium</i> ), upper level (15 – 18 years)	€ 170.00
Technical and vocational colleges (15 – 19 years)	Approx. € 160.00

## Textbook Limits

- The textbooks budget for each school is calculated by multiplying the number of pupils by the cap for the type of school in question. Each school is assigned a total limit; as the available books vary, the school may exceed the limit for a given year (e.g. the 3rd year) provided this is offset in another year (e.g. the 4th year). The school must not exceed its overall budget.

# Budget 2018/19

	Students by type of school 2018/19	Budget 2018/2019
<b>Primary School (6 – 10 years)</b>	367.705	19.991.296,96
<b>Lower Secondary School (10 – 14 years)</b>	217.014	20.798.434,46
<b>Pre-vocational Year (15 years)</b>	16.573	1.356.395,52
<b>Secondary Academic Schools (10 – 18 years)</b>	225.177	27.588.932,84
<b>Higher technical and vocational college (15 – 19 years)</b>	144.565	21.758.189,56
<b>Intermediate technical and vocational school (15 – 18/19 years)</b>	48.908	4.671.468,54
<b>Vocational school for apprentices (15 – 18/19 years)</b>	118.434	5.872.313,58
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.138.376</b>	<b>102.037.031,46</b>

# Ordering and Deadlines

- Since 2001 via Textbook Initiative Online
- Order deadlines:
  - 15th February to 15th April (main ordering period)  
Preliminary ordering based on anticipated numbers for the upcoming school year, based on class/pupil numbers during the current school year
  - June to May 15th (main follow-up ordering period)  
Final needs determined based on actual pupil numbers for the new school year. Ordering process completed.
- The bookshop delivers the textbooks and learning materials to the school at the start of the school year.



# Approval Process

- The approval process is an official administrative act under Austrian law.
- The approval process is concluded by the issuing of a decision.
- Decisions may be appealed before the Supreme Administrative Court
- Textbooks are produced by private publishers for all subjects in every type of school, from the pre-school year to school leaving examinations. All textbooks have to be approved by the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture.

# Approval Process

- There is a long preliminary phase for developing a new textbook: on average it takes 3 years before the completed text is in pupils' hands.
- As a general rule, texts are submitted for approval when still at the manuscript stage. The advantage of this is that changes can be made without incurring substantial costs. Approvals are valid as long as the curriculum, namely five to ten years on an average.
- Every year, the textbooks department handles around 2.000 approval processes for over 1.000 items of learning material or textbooks.
- On average, each textbook submission is approved for two types of school.

## Ordinance on the Approval of Textbooks

- defines the areas for which each of the 31 commissions is responsible.
- defines the procedures for establishing the commissions and organising their tasks
- specifies the criteria for approval of textbooks and other media

## Commissions – Qualification Profile

- Teaching work not less than three years
- Expert knowledge of the curricula and the developments in the education area
- Capacity for teamwork
- Temporal capacity
- Ability for writing reports
- No activity as textbook author
- Appointed by the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Research for periods of four years

## Criteria for Approval of Textbooks

- The book or manuscript must be in accordance with the curriculum in terms of educational objectives and content.
- The material must enhance active participation in the learning process and must be appropriate to the abilities and interests of the age group.
- The texts and illustrations must be correct, meet the latest standards for the subject and fulfil national (or international) norms.
- The material must be appropriate to the pupils' situations and their outlook on jobs and professions, the law and the specific situations of Austria and Europe.

## Criteria for Approval of Textbooks

- The material must be commensurate with the principles of democratic education and contribute to active participation.
- The language must be correct, appropriate for the age group, and appropriate to the layout and visual and graphical elements complementing the text.
- The material must be appropriate to the length of the text, the number and quality of the illustrations, the format and the binding.
- The material must uphold equal treatment of men and women and a society in which men and women are equal partners.

## Variety of Textbooks and Competition

- Textbooks are produced by private publishers for all subjects in every type of school, from the pre-school year to school leaving examinations.
- There is growing demand for diversification and individualisation. The variety of the textbooks guarantees that students receive materials corresponding to their needs and are supported optimally in their learning process.
- That in turn is becoming a significant factor in the development of textbooks and educational materials.

## Variety of Textbooks and Competition

- There is a large number of publishing houses in Austria. The publishing houses are also therefore competitors in the market. The price of a textbook is relevant for the decision to buy it. If the schools select textbooks with low prices, so they can buy more items for the budget per student.
- Competition guarantees fair prices and promotes the quality of learning materials.



## Cooperation and Coordination

- „Schulbuchvertrag“ (Textbook Contract) regulates the price system and the terms of payment and delivery. Contracting parties are the Austrian Federal Chancellery – Department Family and Youth and the Book Trade and Media Management Association (publisher and bookseller).
- The Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research is responsible for the approval process. The approval process is a sovereign act. If the manuscript does not successfully pass the approval process, the authority rejects the application or the publisher withdraws the text from the approval process. If it does pass, the textbook is added to the Textbook Lists and may be independently ordered by schools.
- The relationship between the Ministries and the Book Trade and Media Management Association (publisher and bookseller) is cooperative.